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MARCH 30, 1900.

DEAR DOCTOR: Replying to your inquiries of March 20, concerning plague, I have to say—

(1) That, as far as known, rats do not carry the plague without being affected by it.

(2) It is possible to conceive that the germ may be in the fur of a rat and the animal not be sick with the disease. But it is probable that a rat would soon infect itself from this source, on account of their habit of dressing their fur.

(3) The viability of the plague bacillus outside the body is a disputed question. The German plague commission states that the organism will dry out and die in four days. According to experiments in the hygienic laboratory of this Service, the bacillus of plague has been found alive after twenty-one days on a piece of fabric, dried and kept in a cool, dark place. Further work on this line is being carried on.

(4) According to the work of Batzuroff, rats are infected when fed with plague cultures. It is not likely that the organism lives in the intestinal canal of a healthy rat.

(5) It is not positively known that fleas infected with plague may live in a healthy rat without infecting it. In our hygienic laboratory, fleas from plague-sick guinea pigs were found to carry the plague bacillus in virulent form.

Respectfully,

WALTER WYMAN,
Supervising Surgeon-General U. S. M. H. S.

Dr. EDMOND SOUCHON,

President, Louisiana State Board of Health, New Orleans, La.

Preparations against plague at Astoria, Oreg.

COLUMBIA RIVER QUARANTINE,
Astoria, Oreg., March 22, 1900.

SIR: I have the honor to report that, since your inquiry of January 18, relative to the precautions and preparation of the local health authorities for possible plague, a city physician has been appointed, an effort has been made to clean up the town, with special attention to the Chinese district, and a bounty of 5 cents per rat offered by the city for every dead rat delivered to the chief of police during the next thirty days.

Respectfully,

HILL HASTINGS,
Assistant Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.

Concerning plague suspects at San Francisco.

[Telegram.]

ANGEL ISLAND, CAL., April 2, 1900.

Complete examination of specimens of 3 suspected cases of plague does not show the presence of organism.

KINYOUN,
Surgeon, U. S. M. H. S.